

## Signs and Symptoms

Not everyone who is depressed experiences every symptom. Some people experience a few symptoms; some people suffer many. The severity of symptoms varies among individuals and also over time.

### Sadness: Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" mood

One of the most common symptoms of depression is a constant and overwhelming feeling of sadness. You may also just feel empty, apathetic. Anxiety often accompanies depression. It may be intense, as though one is in great danger. In the case of anxiety associated with depression, that state of tension may persist for no apparent reason.

*"My real feeling was just pure numbness. I just couldn't feel sad, I couldn't feel happy, it was almost like I was underwater with my eyes and my ears all shut off, and I was just there. "*

*-Rodolfo Palma-Luli3n, College Student*

### Hopelessness: Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism

When you are in a depression, you may not be able to see your way out. It may feel as if there is no light at the end of the tunnel. You may begin to lose all hope for things improving, for life getting any better.

*"When you're in the middle of it, you don't know it's going to end. You can't even see the light at the end of the tunnel; it's just not there. You know, you look through the tunnel and all you see is darkness."*

*-Jimmy Brown, Firefighter*

### Guilt: Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness

You may think that it's your own personal failing, that it's your fault that you aren't happier or more productive. The fact is that those feelings are direct symptoms of the illness.

*"You just have a sense of worthlessness. You tell yourself that everything that you are doing is wrong, that there's no possibility of succeeding. If you're looking at changing your life, you won't because you know you are going to fail and you just reinforce that self-fulfilling prophecy. So you don't even bother anymore."*

*-Patrick McCathern, First Sergeant, U.S. Air Force, Retired*

### Loss of Interest: Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities

You may lose interest in everything around you. You may not want to do anything or see anyone. Things that would bring you pleasure before are now just one more burden to deal with. Most people even lose interest in sex, others use it as an escape, like alcohol or drugs.

*"You basically lose interest in everything, you lose interest in everything, and you can't understand why."*

*-Paul Gottlieb, Publisher*

### **Decreased Energy: Decreased energy, fatigue, being "slowed down"**

Your thinking may be slower, your reactions slower, even your movements may become slower, or seem slower. The slowness is further complicated by fatigue, by feeling overwhelmingly tired a lot or even all the time.

*"I had a list of stuff, little projects I was going to get done in the apartment since I had the time. That list just stayed there. It didn't get done. I just didn't have the energy. I didn't have the motivation; I just didn't have the umph to do anything. "*  
- Jimmy Brown, Firefighter

### **Difficulty Concentrating: Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions**

Depression can affect your ability to make decisions, think clearly, perform complicated tasks, concentrate, and remember things. You may feel that you don't remember things that you did before, that you cannot focus on your work, or that you are unable to make decisions.

*"I couldn't concentrate; I couldn't sit still for a minute and really do anything that took any concentration. "*  
- Rodolfo Palma-Luli6n, College Student

### **Difficulty Sleeping: Difficulty sleeping, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping**

Sleep disturbances are common symptoms of depression. A "good night's sleep" becomes virtually impossible. Many people complain of waking up in the middle of the night with their mind racing, wondering how they are going to overcome all of the obstacles before them. Others do little other than sleep but never feel rested. In both cases, the built up fatigue can aggravate every other aspect of depression.

*"Sometimes I would wake up in the middle of the night, and I just couldn't get back to sleep. A feeling of hopelessness would just constantly nag at me, and I couldn't get to sleep. "*  
- Rene Ruballo, Police Officer

### **Changes in Appetite: Appetite and/or weight changes**

Depression affects the appetite in one way or another. Often, you just lose interest in eating because the food has no taste. When anxiety is high, you may not be able to eat. In some cases, however, people will overeat out of frustration or misery.

*"I was down to 150 pounds. I wasn't eating at all. I just had no desire to eat. "*  
-Patrick McCathern, First Sargeant, U.S. Air Force, Retired

### **Thoughts of Death or Suicide: Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts**

When you suffer from depression, thoughts of suicide are often common. If there is no relief over a long period of time, suicide can feel like the only way to end the pain.

*"It's not a matter of when you get depressed, you want to go out and kill yourself. It's a matter of 'I can't stand the pain anymore. I want to end the pain.' And you don't know how to end the pain."*

*-Patrick McCathern, First Sergeant, U.S. Air Force, Retired*

### **Restlessness, Irritability: Restlessness, Irritability**

You can never relax, and you never feel rested. It's not surprising that you would feel angry, irritable, never peaceful. Men may manifest that irritability by lashing out at the people around them, having a volatile temper, not being able to sit still, and perhaps even feeling angry at themselves for not being able to pull out of it on their own.

*"As you get sick, as you become drawn in more and more by depression, you lose that perspective. Events do become more irritating, you get more and more frustrated about getting things done. You feel angrier, you feel sadder, everything is magnified in an abnormal way. "*

*-Paul Gottlieb, Publisher*

### **Persistent Physical Symptoms: Persistent Physical Symptoms**

The stress, tension and fatigue of depression can often manifest themselves as physical symptoms. People may experience stomachaches, indigestion, constant headaches, tightness in the chest, difficulty breathing, etc. It is always possible that these symptoms indicate another medical condition so it is important in either case that you consult a physician. The symptoms are real and need to be treated.

*"It's sort of like a slow headache, but it is always there. It's like something is holding you back, weighing you down."*

*-Rene Ruballo, Police Officer*

If these signs and symptoms describe you or a man that you care about, talk to your healthcare provider, or [check getting help](#) for more information.